R (308)

TALKING POINTS WITH F-15 ENHANCEMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/GIS/IPR
DATE 7/2/85

-- The Administration is moving quickly to counter the erosion in the security situation in the Middle East/Persian Gulf region. It is clear that a new strategy is needed to bolster our friends, protect vital western interests and block Soviet exploitation of regional weakness and instability.

-- Our friends have three overriding concerns:

their ability to defend themselves in the face of growing threats to stability, our ability and willingness to resist the Soviet advance and finding a peaceful end to the Arab-Israel conflict to reduce tensions.

-- The perception that we and they are dealing effectively with the external threats is crucial to their efforts to strengthen internal stability. Countries like Saudi Arabia have relied heavily on the U.S. for their security support in the past. In the past few years, the Saudis and our other friends in the area became deeply disappointed at the perceived failure of the U.S. to respond firmly and quickly to the new dangers that arose with Afghanistan, the revolution in Iran and Soviet inroads in the Horn of Africa. They saw drift and indecision in the U.S. that caused them to doubt our reliability and steadfastness in defending our mutual vital interests.

-- The approach of this Administration will be a broad effort to rebuild the confidence of our friends, including assisting them with reasonable and adequate means of defending themselves. As confidence grows, our friends will be in a position to move towards closer security cooperation with us. Our proposed sales to Saudi Arabia are an important and necessary first step in that process.

-- Let me underscore here that strengthening the security situation and the search for peace are mutually reinforcing elements in our policy. There can be no move towards peace unless there are feelings of security and confidence among the regional states. And there can be no real security unless there is movement towards peace.

-- Let me emphasize that the sales are in the context of our ongoing security relations with Saudis in defense of our mutual vital interests. This is not granting a unilateral favor. A more secure Saudi Arabia will enhance the key Saudi role of promoting stability in this area, and I should add, in cooperation with us.

-- The dangers to the region from instability and the Soviet Union also threaten Israel's security. This Administration will assure that Israel's defenses remain strong.

-- Accordingly, and in recognition of Israel's expressed concerns about the sales to Saudi Arabia, we are planning to seek Congressional approval to provide Israel with additional credits of $300 million each in fiscal years 1983 and 1984. These credits will enable the Israelis to purchase air defense aircraft or other equipment that they have deferred because of their difficult financial position. And we will increasingly work with Israel to counter the Soviet threat.

-- Finally, we intend to take those steps which may be required in the future to strengthen the security and confidence of our friends and ourselves in this critical region. These steps are a sign of our determination to protect our interests by enhancing the security and stability of the area.